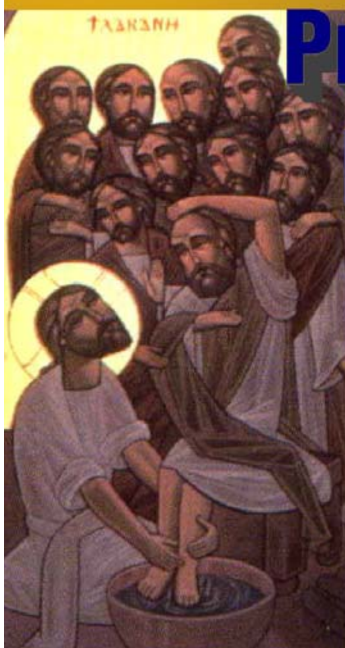
Servants' Preparation Program



Coptic Orthodox
Diocese of the
Southern
United States

"For I have given you an example,
that you should do as I have done to you"
John 13:15

Coptic Orthodox
Diocese of the Southern United States

PAT 101

ANTE NICENE FATHERS

Servants' Preparation Program

2006

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INTRODUCTION

Patrology

The word “Patrology” is derived from the Latin word “Pater” which means, “Father.” Patrology is the science, which deals with the life, acts, writings, sayings, doctrines and thoughts of the orthodox writers of the early church:

1) The life of the Fathers: In order to understand their writings and sayings, their lives and the environment in which they lived, must also be considered.

2) Their acts: The writings, sermons, dialogues, letters, etc. of the Fathers are inseparable from their own lives. Patrology’s message is to be sure of the authenticity of these acts scientifically, publishing them and translating them in modern languages.

3) More importantly is the discovery of the thoughts of the Fathers, their dogma, doctrines and concepts concerning God, man, church, salvation, worship, creation, the body, the heavenly life, etc.

Patrology is the door through which we can enter into the church and attain her spirit, which affects our inner life, conduct and behavior. Through Patrology, the acts of the Fathers are transferred into living thoughts and concepts which are based on a sound foundation, without ignoring the world around us.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE PATRISTIC WRITINGS

We can classify the patristic writings on many bases:

1. TIME

The Patristic writings, especially of the first five centuries may be classified on “Time” bases. Some scholars see that the first ecumenical council separated the Fathers into two kinds according to their literature;

a. The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Their literature is very simple.
b. The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.

2. LANGUAGES

a. The Greek (Eastern) Fathers: the majority of the eastern Fathers wrote in Greek beside their national languages, such as the Coptic, Syriac and Armenian.
b. The Latin (Western) Fathers.

3. PLACE

a. The Egyptian Fathers, especially those of the School of Alexandria, and the Desert Fathers.
b. The Antiochenes.
c. The Capadocian Fathers.
d. The Latin Fathers.

4. THE MATERIAL
a. Apologetic writings.
b. Biblico-exegetical writings.
c. Homilies and sermons.
d. Letters.
e. Liturgical works.
f. Christian poetry and songs.
g. Dialogues.
h. Ascetic writings.
i. Church canons.
j. Church history.

Many scholars had set a classification, which is a mixture of some of the above-mentioned ones.

THE OUTLINE OF THE PATRISTIC LITERATURE

We can present the patristic literature in five stages, using Quasten's system to some extent:

1. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN PATRISTIC LITERATURE
* The beginnings of Canonical Legislation, and Liturgical formulas.
* The writings of the Apostolic Fathers, who were disciples of the Apostles.
* The Apocryphal Literature of the New Testament, which were separated from the canonical books.
* The beginning of Christian Poetry and early hymns.
* The first Acts of the Martyrs.
* The works of the Apologists.
* The beginnings of Heretical Literature.
* The beginnings of Anti-Heretical Literature.

2. THE ANTE-NICENE LITERATURE AFTER ST. IRENAEUS
* The writings of the Early Fathers of the School of Alexandria.
* The Fathers of Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine.
* The beginning of the Western Christian literature by Minucius Felix, Hippolytus of Rome, Novitian etc...
* The African Christian Fathers, such as Tertullian, St. Cyprian, Arnobius of Sicca and Lactantius.
* Other writings of the West, such as Victorinus of Pettau, Re- ticius of Autun etc...

3. THE GOLDEN AGE AND THE EASTERN FATHERS
The period between the Nicene Council (325 A.D) and the Chalcedonian Council (425 A.D):
* The Egyptian Fathers, such as SS. Alexander who faced Arius, Athanasius the Apostolic, Serapion of Thmuis, Didymus the Blind, Theophilus, Synesius of Cyrene,

Nonnus of Panopolis, Cyril the Great...

* The Founder of the monastic movement in Egypt, and the writings of those who visited Egypt to practice and / or to record the monastic life.
* The writings of Asia Minor: Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognis of Nicaea, Asterius the Sophist, Marcellus of Ancyra, Basil of Ancyra .
* The Capadocian Fathers: Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Amphilochius of Iconium and Asterius of Amasea etc.
* The writers of Antioch and Syria: Eustathius of Antioch, Aetius of Antioch, Eunomius of Cyzicus, Eusebius of Caesarea, Acacius of Caesarea, Gelasius of Caesarea, Euzoius of Caesarea, Eusebius of Emesa, Nemesius of Emesa etc.
* Christianity And Manichaeism: Hegemonius, Titus of Bostra, Cyril of Jerusalem, Apollinaris of Laodicea, Epiphanius of Salamis, Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Polychronius of Apamea, John Chrysostom, Acacius of Beroea, Antiochus of Ptolemais, Severian of Gabala, Macarius Magnes, Hesychius of Jerusalem, Nilus of Ancyra, Mark the Hermit, Diadochus of Photice, Nestorius, Eutherius of Tyana, Proclus of Constantinople, Gennadius of Constantinople, Basil of Seleucia etc.
* Church Historians of Constantinople: Philip Sidetes, Philostorgius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret of Cyrus.

4. THE WESTERN FATHERS IN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES

* St. Hilary of Pitiers,
* Anti-Arian Writers: Hosuis, Eusebius of Vercelli, Lucifer, Maruis Victorinusetc.
* St. Ambrose Of Milan.
* St. Jerome, Rufinus of Aquileia
* Christian Poetry: Commodian, Iuvenus, Centones, Damasus, Ausonius, Prudentius, Paulinus of Nola, Claudianus etc. * St. Augustine and the Pelagian controversy.
* The writers of Gaul: Eucherius of Lyons, Eutropius, Evagrius, Hilary of Arles, Honoratus of Arles, John Cassian, Sulpicius Severus, Etheria etc.
* Italian writers: Fortunatius of Aquileia, Maximus of Turin, Peter Chrysologus, Siricus, Anastasius, Innocent I, Zosimus, Boniface I, Celestine I, Sixtus III, Leo. *[See Angelio Di Berardino, J. Quasten: Patrology, vol. IV.]*

5. THE WRITINGS AFTER THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON

* The Great Miaphesite Fathers: SS. Severus of Antioch, Timothy of Alexandria and Philoxenos of Mobagh.
* The Egyptian Fathers in the middle ages

THE BEGINNINGS OF LITURGICAL FORMULAS AND CANONICAL LEGISLATION

The Church preached heavenly life to the world through human languages. Her liturgies, order, and canons witness to this evangelical life. Therefore, we start our study by referring to the Apostles' Creed (*Symbolum Apostolorum*) and the Didache.

Two of the most striking features of the early Church are: Her eschatological nature and life and The development of her visible organization

We are her going to discuss briefly these two writings.

1 THE APOSTLES' CREED

CREED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Christian faith is a life in which the believer experiences personally together with his brothers, through the unity with the Father in the Son by the work of the Holy Spirit. This life cannot be defined by a certain creed, nor limited by a canon because it cannot be expressed by human language. Nevertheless, there was a necessity for those who accept faith to proclaim this faith in a brief and simple form before attaining the membership in the Body of Christ, i.e., before receiving baptism, this form is called a baptismal creed.

When our Lord asked His disciples about their faith St. Peter said. "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" Matt. 16:16. Perhaps it was the starting point of setting a Church creed that ensured our faith in Christ.

Again when our Lord granted His disciples the universal authority to preach, teach and baptize the believers, He said, "Go you therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" Matt. 28:19. Our Lord Himself revealed the Trinitarian formula as a baptismal creed.

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles preserved the original form of the Creed (8: 37). The apostle Philip baptized the eunuch of Ethiopia after the latter had professed his faith thus: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." This passage proves that the starting point of the Creed was the confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. There was no need to require more from the candidates or baptism. The confession of Jesus as the Messiah proved sufficient, especially for converts from Judaism.

As time went by, more and more titles were added. Soon afterwards the word "Savior" was included in the formula, and thus the acrostic (ICHTHUS) appeared, a favorite Creed in the Hellenistic world, because (ICHTHUS) 'fish' contains the initials of the five Greek words for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior."

THE HISTORY OF CREEDS

1. As we have said, from the earliest days of the Church the need of some kind of

profession of faith before receiving baptism was felt. Candidates for baptism used simple and brief creeds containing a doctrinal summary of Christianity, or a compound of the faith of the church.

2. When the heresies appeared, especially "Gnosticism," they considered the bodies and all materials as evil and created by Satan, denying the reality of incarnation. They almost said that Christ had a heavenly body, different from our own body, and that He appeared as if He was a man, but He never suffered nor was crucified. Therefore the primitive formula was not sufficient. There was a need of emphasizing the reality of incarnation, suffering, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of our Incarnate God.

When heresies, concerning the Trinitarian faith spread, reciting a creed with emphasis on church faith became necessary, not only for baptism, but in every worship, private or communal "Say the creed daily," St. Augustine advised his flock, "when you compose yourself to sleep, repeat your creed, render it to the Lord, be not irked to say it over."

THE APOSTLES' CREED

This creed has a special importance for the Western church, considering it as the basic of her creeds. Schaff states that the Apostles' Creed (Symbolum Apostolicum) is the Creed of creeds, as the Lord's prayer is the Prayer of prayers.

It is a brief summary of the principal doctrines of Christianity; hence it may be called a compendium of the theology of the Church. This creed had been set after the apostolic age, but it was called an apostolic, because all its articles express the faith of the Apostles.

It is agreed that the contents of the old Creed are apostolic, but it is not possible to prove that the phraseology goes back to the Apostles, nor is it possible to prove that it does not.

THE TEXT OF THE APOSTLES' CREED

1. I believe in God the Father Almighty, *Maker of heaven and earth*;
2. And in Jesus Christ, His Only Son, our Lord:
3. Who was *conceived* by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; *suffered* under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, *dead*, and buried;
5. *He descended into Hades*, the third day He rose from the dead;
6. He ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father *Almighty*;
7. from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.
8. And I believe in the Holy Spirit;
9. the holy *Catholic* Church; *the communion of saints*;
10. the forgiveness of sins;
11 the resurrection of the body;
12. *and the life everlasting*.

2 THE DIDACHE - the Lord's instruction to the gentiles through the twelve apostles

IT'S IMPORTANCE

It is undoubtedly one of the oldest documents, if not the oldest, of Christian antiquity. It is the oldest source of ecclesiastical law or church manual which we possess. In early Church, especially in Egypt, Syria and Palestine, the Didache was very highly esteemed. It was known by name, and in part (by quotation), from St. Clement of Alexandria, Origen and St. Athanasius.

F. L. Cross states that the discovery of this work as a guide of an educational teaching and church order is the most important discovery in the field of the Fathers' literature in the last one hundred years.

THE AUTHOR

It would be rash to presume that the title points to apostolic authorship. The text in no wise justifies this. This author's intention, evidently, was to give a brief summary of the doctrine of Christ as taught to the nations by the Apostles. This then explains the title.

Naturally, the Didache was not attributed to a specific author, as it was a summary of our Lord's teachings to the Apostles through their evangelism to the Gentiles. It is in fact, a collection, which the writer put in harmony.

DATE

Its writing dated back to the second half of the first century and not to the Apostolic era for the following reasons:

- The details contained in it refer to the stability of the Church situation. This had been realized at the end of the apostolic time.
- Most of the quotations are derived from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, which means that it was not collated before 90 A.D.
- It does not deal with the attitude of Judaism, which was the first and the essential problem the Church faced at the apostolic age.

Nevertheless, the work had an inner witness that it was collated at a time very close to the Apostolic era, for the following reasons:

- Mentioning the running water in baptism, and the absence of any text of the creed.
- Its language was very simple, which fitted the period of the change, from the writing of the New Testament to the writings of the church.

IT'S HISTORY

The complete text of this book of religious instructions was discovered in 1873 A.D. by Philotheos Bryennios, Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of Nicomedia, in the Jerusalem Codex (A.D. 1052 or 1056) and was published in 1883. (Barnabas and St. Clement of Rome were discovered also.)

CONTENTS

Judging by the title only, one might expect the Didache to reveal the evangelical preaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rather it contains ecclesiastical rituals of the time, instructions on the organization of communities, and regulations pertaining to liturgical functions. In fact we here have the oldest Church-Order, and the venerable prototype of all the later collections of Constitutions or Apostolic Canons with which church law in the East and in the West began. This document enriched and deepened, in an amazing way, our knowledge of the beginnings of the Church..

This work can be divided into four sections, or rather in three sections and a conclusion:

FIRST SECTION: Christian Behavior 1-6

SECOND SECTION: Liturgical and Sacramental Life 7-10, 14

THIRD SECTION: Disciplinary Regulations 11-15

FOURTH SECTION: The Parousia of the Lord.

SAMPLES FROM THE DIDACHE

[There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two ways. "First of all, love the God who made you; secondly, your neighbor as yourself; and all things whatsoever you would not have befall yourself, do not do to another."

[*Be watchful over your life; never let your lamps go out or your loins be un-girt, but keep yourselves always in readiness, for you can never be sure of the hour when our Lord may be coming. Come often together for spiritual improvement; because all the past years of your faith will be no good to you at the end, unless you have made yourselves perfect.]*

THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

The Apostolic Fathers were the Christian writers of the first and second centuries, who may be considered as the first teachers after the Apostles. Their writings presented to us the faith which these Apostolic Fathers received either through their direct contact with the Apostles or as handed to them by their disciples

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS' WRITINGS:

- Most of these writings were similar to letters. However, in actual fact they did not have the same type or mode of literature. it is not possible for us to relate these writings to each other neither from the characteristic aspect nor the issue. However, by a slight overlooking we can say that these articles, in total deal with two issues.

(a) The internal unity of the church and the preservation of her peace.
(b) Preservation of the pure faith without heathen flaws.

- These writings were featured by simplicity with inflamed zeal, without reliance on Greek philosophy nor Hellenic eloquence. With the exception of the letter to Diognetus, these writings do not form a work of literature.

- These writings came as a result of practical pastoral needs, and not for the purpose of a scholarly research. They did not offer us spiritual theological studies, they clarified through the practical simplistic faith what was the Gospel as lived by the early church before it clashed with the secular authority. "The Apostolic Fathers," it has been justly said, "are not great writers, but great characters."

"The genuine pastoral concern" was the common factor in these writings. The Apostolic Fathers were not concerned with the presentation of specific views, rather entering everyone into the practical life of the faith. Hence they did not select difficult theological terminologies but offered hearts kindled with the love of the human race. "Those were times of heroism, not of words; an age, not of writers, but of (spiritual) soldiers, not of talkers, but of sufferers"

- Their writings were characterized by the eschatological character. The second coming of Christ the Lord was the ultimate "Christian Life" through their direct relationship with the Apostles, as they spoke of the person of Christ with enthusiasm.

  Their writings revealed a deep yearning towards the ascended Christ the Lord and Savior who still remained alive and dwelt among them. They waited for His coming to see Him face to face. This yearning carried a saintly form in their lives, writings, and worship.

- These writings were characterized by the ecclesiastic feature and it bore the spirit of communion - the church communion throughout the whole universe in

faith, tradition, and worship regardless of the long distance between the churches and the difference in cultures and customs between each other.

- Lightfoot states "(These writings) lack the scientific spirit which distinguished the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, and enabled them to formulate the doctrines of the faith as bulwark against lawless speculation."

- Finally, it is worth realizing that these writings, irrespective of their worth and irrespective of the sanctity of their writers, are not a divine revelation; whereby we regard every word in them as holy. They are the melody of the spirit, which the church sings. This eternal tune is extended from generation to generation in harmony through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who works in the church, to admit the whole world to the union with the Father, in our Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

CLASSIFICATION

The term 'Apostolic Fathers' was entirely unknown in the early Church. It was introduced by scholars of the seventeenth century. The French scholar Jean B Cotelier, a man from the 17th century published his two volumes under the title of "*Patres aevi Apostolici*" in the year 1672. They comprised the following five ecclesiastical writers:
1. The epistle attributed to **Barnabas.**
2. The book "The Shepherd " by **Hermas.**
3. Two letters: one by the Roman **Clement** and the other was attributed to him.
4. The seven letters of **Ignatius.**
5. A letter by **Polycarp** and an article about his martyrdom. In 1765 Andras Gallandi, in his series *Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum,* added to them the following works:
6. A letter to **Diognetus** (author unknown).
7. Experts by **Papias** of Hieropolis, and the unknown author of the *Epistle to* **Quadratus**.
8. In 1873 the "**Didache**" or "*The Lord's teachings to the Gentiles as conveyed by the 12 Apostles"* was discovered. This was added to the writings of the Apostolic Fathers.

Finally, some of the scholars were of the opinion to add what was known as "**The Apostles' Creed**" to the collection of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. However, the majority did not agree to this.

ST. CLEMENT OF ROME

HIS LIFE

He was a disciple of the Apostles Paul and Peter. Eusebius, St. Jerome and others followed Origen in saying, that he was the same person, who was mentioned by St. Paul, as one of his faithful fellow workers in Philippi (Phil. 4:3). He was a Jewish slave, or a son of a Jewish slave, owned by Clemns, who freed him; then he received the name of his master. According to St.Irenaeus he was the fourth bishop of Rome.

Rufinus was the first writer, who stated that St. Clement had been martyred. An apocrypha, from the fourth century, stated that the people in Rome were enraged because he converted Theodora, a noblewoman in Rome, her husband, Sisinnus, and 423 people into Christianity; and he was exiled. Others said, that the council of the senators was enraged because they saw Clement as a noble man converted to Christianity, attracted some of the noblemen to the same religion. They advised him to deny Christianity, but he refused. They presented a report against him to the emperor Trajan, who exiled and punished him by making him work in cutting stones. In the exile he met with about 2000 Christians and preached many pagans. Therefore the ruler ordered that he be thrown in the sea with a helm fixed in his neck.

HIS WRITINGS:

1) THE FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS: In the first century a group of the youth rebelled against the clergy. They believed that they were wiser and more capable of teaching. They enraged the people and dismissed many of them. Therefore St. Clement sent this letter which is full of wisdom, modesty and love, quoting many texts from the Old Testament.

2) THE SO-CALLED SECOND EPISTLE OF CLEMENT

3) TWO LETTERS ON VIRGINITY

4) THE APOSTOLIC INSTITUTIONS

5) THE PSEUDO-CLEMENTINES

SAMPLES OF HIS WRITINGS

[*God is seen by the mind, not by the body; by the spirit, not by the flesh. Also angels, who are spirits, see God; and therefore, as long as they are men, cannot see Him.*

But after the resurrection of the dead, when they shall have been made like the angels, they shall be able to see God.

And thus, my statement not contrary to the law (Exodus. 33:20); neither is that which our Master said, "blessed are they of a pure heart, for they shall see God" Matt. 5:8.

For He showed that a time shall come in which of men shall be made angels, who in the spirit of their mind shall see God.] Recogn 3:30.

[*For when a soul has come to the faith of God, it obtains the virtue of Heavenly water, by which it extinguishes the demon like a spark of fire.*] Recogn 4:17.

[*There is also a sixth sense, namely that of foreknowledge: for those five senses are capable of knowledge, but the sixth is that of foreknowledge; and this the prophets possessed.*] Recogn 2:51.

ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

HIS LIFE

He was born between the years 30 and 35 A.D, most probably of a Syrian origin, of Hellenic culture, and a pagan. When the Apostles saw in him a burning zeal, they ordained him a bishop for Antioch. He was known for his zeal for the salvation of souls and won many Gentiles for Christ the Lord.

It was said that he saw in a vision the angles praising and glorifying God, singing the "Trisagion," he then conveyed what he saw to the church of Antioch. Later this spread to the rest of the churches.

St. Ignatius describes himself as being called "Theophoros," meaning "bearer of God," or perhaps "borne by God."

HIS MEETING WITH THE PREFECT OF SYRIA

When the prefect heard about his zeal for spreading Christianity, he summoned him and entered into a dialogue with him regarding the "Crucified Jesus." This ended by the order of chaining St. Ignatius (who claimed that in his heart he carried the Crucified), and sending him to Great Rome to be given as food to savage beasts to please the people. When the bishop heard this, he rejoiced as he had been waiting for this chance for a long time. He considered this as a great gift. He knelt and shouted in joy: [*Lord, I thank You because You granted to honor me with the abundance of Your love; You allowed that I be chained with metal chains like Your Apostle Paul*.] When he said his prayers, he kissed his chains, and pleaded God to protect the church which He entrusted him to serve for about 40 years.

TO ROME

The saint left, under a heavy guardianship of ten soldiers. When the soldiers saw how the people surrounded him at his departure, and the way they expressed their love, they resorted to treat him with cruelty and violence. He nicknamed them the leopards, though he was gentle with them. The people paid the guards to be kind to him.

They arrived at Smyrna, where its bishop, Polycarp, and the bishops of Magnesia, Ephesus and Tralles met him. They all came to his reception with representatives from several churches of Asia Minor. They sought his blessings and the pearls of his teachings. He took this opportunity and sent letters to these churches, telling them to beware of heretics and to submit to church authority.

He also wrote an epistle to Rome when he heard that some of the believers tried their best to save him from martyrdom. [*I shall never have a better chance than this of getting to God... This favor only I beg of you: suffer me to be a libation poured to God, while there is still an altar ready for me. Then you may form a loving choir around it and sing hymns of praise in Jesus Christ to the Father, for permitting Syria's bishop, summoned from the realms of the morning, to have reach the land of the setting sun*.]

IN TROAS
He sailed by ship from Smyrna to Troas where the saint also wrote, three letters "to Philadelphia, Smyrna and to St. Polycarp." From Troas he sailed to Neopolis to Philippi then to Epirus and Tyrhene and finally to the district of Portus, where he met the brethren whose joy for seeing him was mixed with their sorrow for his departure. He met them with all love and asked them to show true love and have courage. He knelt and prayed asking God to stop the wave of persecution against the church and allow love to grow among brethren.

Finally, the guards rushed him to the arena, the wild beasts were let lose and he faced them cheerfully like a person hurrying to the eternal heavenly city to live with his Master in the eternal glory. Two lions sprang upon him and left only a few bones of him. He was martyred in 108 A.D in Rome10.

The believers collected his relics and sent them to his church in Antioch. They were buried outside the fence close to the door of the burial place. They remained there until Jerome's time. The temple of Fortune at the center of Antioch was converted into a Christian church. Emperor Theodosius The Young (408-450 A.D) transferred the relics of the saint to this church and named it after the righteous martyr11 in his commemoration. The church celebrates his Day on the 7th Abib.

SAMPLES OF HIS WRITINGS
[*I am a priest for my Lord Jesus Christ, and to Him I offer a daily sacrifice. I desire to offer my life as a sacrifice as He offered His life a Sacrifice because of His love to me.]*

[*I exhort you, not to show unseasonable kindness to me. Let me be given to the wild beasts, for through them I can attain unto God. I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread of Christ. Rather entice the wild beasts, that they may become my tomb and may leave no part of my body behind, so that I may not, when I am fallen asleep, be burdensome to anyone.*
Then shall I be truly a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world shall not so much as see my body. Supplicate the Lord for me, that through these instruments I may be found a sacrifice to God.] Rom. 4

[*Do your diligence therefore to meet together more frequently for thanksgiving to God and for His glory. For, when you meet together frequently, the powers of Satan are cast down; and his mischief comes to naught in the concord of your faith*.] Ephes. 11.

[*Be imitators of Jesus Christ.*] Philad. 7.

[*Obey your bishop, as Jesus Christ followed the Father, and the presbytery as the Apostles; and to the deacons pay respect, as to God's commandment. Let no man do anything pertaining to the Church without the bishop. Let that be held a valid Eucharist which is under the bishop or one to whom he shall have committed it. Wherever the*

bishop shall appear, there let the people be.] Smyrn. 8

[*Let there be one prayer in common, one supplication, one mind, one hope, in love and in joy unblameable, which is Jesus Christ, than whom there is nothing better. Hasten to come together all of you, as to one temple, of God; as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from One Father and is with One and has gone to One.*] Magn.7

[*He that truly possesses the word of Jesus is able also to hear even His very silence, that He may be perfect; that through his speech he may act and through his silence He may be known.*] Ephes. 15

ST. POLYCARP OF SMYRNA

HIS LIFE

He seems to have been the leading Christian figure in Roman Asia in the middle of the second century. His long life (about which unfortunately little is known) is thus an important link between the Apostolic age and the Christian writers (e.g St. Irenaeus), who flourished at the end of the second century. He was worthy to be called *"the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, and the destroyer of gods."*

A pious lady, called Callisto, bought him as a slave, as revealed to her in a vision. When he grew up he became the manager of her house. For a certain reason she had to travel and left all her possessions in his charge. He gave the needy, orphans and widows generously of what he was left with. Upon the lady's return one of his fellow-slaves reported him saying that he distributed almost all what she had. When she looked into the matter she found the stores were full. Therefore, she decided to punish the slave for being a liar. Polycarp interceded for him, and told her the truth, that he actually did distribute a great deal of what was stored. She was extremely pleased at that and bequeathed Polycarp with all her wealth. However Polycarp had no interest in wealth.

POLYCARP BISHOP OF SMYRNA

It is said that Bucolus, Bishop of Smyrna, ordained Polycarp as a deacon. He witnessed for Christ, throughout his life and preached among the Gentiles, Jews and heretics. Therefore the bishop ordained him as a priest, and declared that he was well suited to be his counselor, and his partner in teaching. According to a tradition held by Tertullian, Polycarp was appointed a bishop of Smyrna by St. John the Apostle, before he was exiled to Patmus.

ST. POLYCARP AND THE HERETICS

He devoted much of his energy to preserve the orthodox faith, combating such heretics as the Marcionites and Valentinians. It is said that he had converted some of them to the true faith.

[O good God! For what times have You kept me that I should endure such things!] he would cry out as he heard the teaching of the Gnostics, and he would tell how once at Ephesus the Apostle John went to the baths and, finding the early Gnostic Cerinthus there, rushed out, saying, *"Let us run away, lest even the baths-house fall in, for within us is Cerinthus, the enemy of truth."*

St. Ireneaus reported one incident that demonstrated the severity of St. Polycarp's attitude towards heresies and heretics. St. Polycarp once met the heretic Marcion on the streets. "Do you recognize me?" asked Marcion. "*Of course*," replied Polycarp, "*I recognize you as the first- born of Satan*!.

WITH ST. IGNATIUS

We first meet him as the relatively young bishop of Smyrna, when the aging St. Ignatius

of Antioch was on his way to martyrdom. It was in Smyrna that St. Ignatius made that memorial stop on his final journey, and St. Polycarp was the only person recorded to whom the great martyr ever addressed a personal letter. In the years that followed, St. Polycarp gathered St. Ignatius' letters and passed them on to other.

IN ROME

At the end of his life, in 154 or early 155 A.D, St. Polycarp paid a visit to Rome to see the bishop Anicetus, and to discuss, among other things, the date of keeping the Easter festival. It was agreed that each Church should maintain its own custom and that Asia should carry on reserving the Quartodeciman (the exact day of Jewish Passover).Although the two bishops differed, nevertheless, they parted on the best terms, and they participated together in celebrating the liturgy of Eucharist. Soon after his return to Smyrna , persecution was waiting him.

ST. POLYCARP'S WIDENED-HEART

When St. Polycarp heard the news of persecution he was not disturbed, and he wanted to stay in the city. Under the pressure of his people he withdrew to a farm not far away from the city, and stayed there, together with a few friends, praying night and day for the churches throughout the world as was his custom (5:1). His heart was widened and inflamed with love towards all the churches, even in the critical moments of sufferings. He was not busy with himself or even with his own local church, but with all the churches throughout the world.

ST. POLYCARP'S BRAVERY

As he saw a vision, his pillow burning up with fire, he returned and said to his friends, "*I must be burned alive*." St. Polycarp was arrested, during a public pagan festival. When the soldiers saw him, "*they marveled at his age and composure and were surprised that eagerness to apprehend an old man like him was so great*" (6:1).

When the proconsul threatened him, he replied, "*You threaten fire which burns for an hour and is soon quenched; for you are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment reserved for the wicked. But why do you wait? Come, do what you will!"* (11).

When the pyre was prepared, he readily took off his clothes and loosened his belt, and also made an effort to take off his shoes to hurry to offer himself as a sacrifice (13).

As the soldiers were about to nail him so that he might not escape from the fire, because of its unbearable pains, he said*, "Let me be as I am, for He who makes it possible for me to endure the fire will also make it possible for me to remain on the pyre unmoved without the security of nails" (13).*

SAMPLES OF HIS WRITINGS

[*O Lord, Almighty God,*
Father of Your beloved and blessed Son, Jesus Christ,
through whom we have received the perfect knowledge of You,
God of angels and powers and of all creation,
and of the whole race of saints
who live under Your eyes!

I bless you,
because you have considered me worthy of this day and hour
to receive a portion among the number of the martyrs,
in the cup of your Christ,
unto the resurrection of the eternal life,
both of soul and body,
in the incorruption of the Holy Spirit,
among whom may I be received today as a rich and acceptable sacrifice,
just as you have prepared beforehand,
and revealed beforehand,
and fulfilled,
O undeceiving and true God.
For this reason and for all these things I praise you,
I bless you,
I glorify you,
through the eternal and heavenly high priest Jesus Christ your beloved Son,
through whom to you with Him and the Holy Spirit be glory now and forever. Amen.]

[*Therefore grid up your loins and serve God in fear and truth, forsaking the vain and empty talking and the error of many, for that you have believed in Him that raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and gave unto Him glory and a throne on His right hand; unto whom all things were made subject that are in heaven and that are on earth*.]

[I exhort you, then, to abstain from love of money, and to be pure and trustworthy...
I am exceedingly unhappy, then on account of that man and his wife; to whom may the Lord give true repentance!
Therefore, you too be sober in this matter; and don't consider such people as enemies; but bring them back as weak and erring members that you may preserve your body in its entirety. For by doing this you build one another.

THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

Other documents of the Apostolic Fathers have another type, for although unknown persons wrote these documents; these writings uncover the life of the people, their spiritual struggling, their worship and their aim at that era.

THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

This document, which is in a form of a letter, is actually theological, contains nothing personal, and lacks the ordinary introduction and conclusion. The author, whose name is not mentioned, aims to teach the perfect knowledge (*gnosis*) and faith.

The epistle declares the author's purpose:
[*I have hastened to send this brief communication so that along with your faith you must have perfect knowledge* (gnosis).] 1:52.

It portrays his religious zeal, explaining the role of faith in the renewal of our nature.
[*Learn! Before we believed in God, the abode of our heart was corrupt and infirm, truly a temple built by human hands. For it was full of idolatry, and was a house of demons, because we did what was contrary to God, but "it will be built in the Lord's Name" - pay attention - so that the temple of the Lord may be built gloriously.*
How?
Learn! When we receive the remission of sins and place our hope on the Lord, we become new, created again from the beginning. Wherefore God truly dwells in our "dwelling place" - in us.
In what way?
The word of His faith, the calling of His promise, the wisdom of His righteous ordinances, the commandments of His teaching; He Himself prophesying in us, He Himself dwelling in us, by opening for us the door of the temple..., and giving us repentance, He leads those who had been in bondage to death into the incorruptible temple.
For he who desires to be saved looks not to the (external) man, but to Him who dwells in him and speaks in him, and he is amazed at the fact that he never either had heard Him speak such words from his mouth nor had himself ever desired to hear (them)!
This is a pneumatic (spiritual) temple built up to the Lord!] 16:7-10.

THE AUTHOR

According to an ancient tradition it is attributed to St. Barnabas, the co-worker of St. Paul. But there is no evidence in the text that it belongs to St. Barnabas or any of the apostles.

CONTENT

The letter is divided into two parts:
1. The first section (chapters 1-17) is of a dogmatic character. In chapter 1:5 the author states the purposes of his work in these words: [That your knowledge may be perfected along with your faith.] This knowledge, however, is unique.

2. The second section (chapters 18-21) takes up morals and manifests no special bias. It describes, exactly like the Didache, the contrast between the way of life and that of death, but it calls one, that of light and the other that of darkness. To sketch the way of light, it offers a large number of moral precepts which reflect the Decalogue, while the passage dealing with the way of darkness consists of a catalogue of various kinds of vices and sins.

PAPIAS OF HIERAPOLIS

HIS LIFE

We are introduced to Papias (Born between 60 and 70 A.D), his writings, and thoughts, mainly through the writings of St. Irenaeus and Eusebius. The first (Eusebius) states that Papias is the disciple of St. John the Beloved (the Evangelist), and the colleague of St. Polycarp the bishop of Samyrna. He was bishop of Hierapolis in Phyrgia in Asia Minor.

EXPLANATIONS OF THE SAYINGS OF THE LORD (*logion kuriakon exegeseis*)

St. Irenaeus, who was his contemporary, stated that he wrote Five books. St. Irenaeus praised his works in this field as a connection to the Apostolic era. This work was discovered only during the Fourteenth century if not later, but so far a full copy was never found.

In them he deals with the origin of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark, and of the witnesses on whom he depends. St. Irenaeus believes Papias to have been a disciple of St. John.

Eusebius believed Papias to have been a man of very few talents.
He ridiculed him, firstly, because he defended the belief in the millennium (the theory of a thousand years after the general resurrection when Christ will reign on earth), and secondly, because he showed very little critical judgment in the selection and interpretation of his sources. Eusebius informs us that, "he was a man of very little intelligence, as is clear from his books."

The fragments collected by Eusebius, and others quoted by Apollinaris, are all we have of the work of Papias

THE "SHEPHERD" OF HERMAS

HERMAS

The "Muratorian Fragmenton Canon," which dated back to the second century, stated that Hermas, author of the "Shepherd" was the brother of Pius, bishop of Rome (140-150 A. D). Origen was of the opinion that the author of this book was Hermas, the one mentioned in Romans (16:14).

He was zealous about repentance, hence he wrote his book "The Shepherd" to exhort the sinners to repent, showing the purity of the church being in danger as a result of the prevalence of sin and to remind them that the end was near.

THE SHEPERD

"The Shepherd" of Hermas is counted among the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, but in fact it belongs to the Apocryphal visions. It is a book of visions (*Apocalypse*) given to Hermas through two heavenly symbols: the first, of an old lady who revealed to him the first four visions, and the second was of the angel of penitence who appeared in the form of a Shepherd. In the fifth vision, he was given the commands and similitudes.

The Shepherd of Hermas or the Apocalypse, Pastor *(Poimen)*, is the longest and most remarkable of the Apostolic writings.

THE EARLY CHURCH'S VIEW OF THE "SHEPHERD"

Evidences for it existed since the second century. St. Irenaeus, St. Clement of Alexandria and the scholar Origen made references to it; perhaps they regarded it as a Canonical book. It was found in the Alexandrine manuscript of the Holy Bible together with the epistle of Barnabas, after the holy books (perhaps as significant as an ecclesiastic book).

Origen admitted that during his time, some undermined this book. Eusebius considered it as one of the anti-Bible publications. As to St. Athanasius, although he considered it a useful book, yet, he made it one of the non-canonical books8.

In respect to the West, Tertullian considered it a book which encouraged adulterers. St. Jerome stated that this book was forgotten in the West during the fourth century

THE EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS

THE AUTHOR

Nothing is known of the author. The epistle is frequently ascribed to St. Justin the Martyr. It is not mentioned by Eusebius, or in any other ancient account of St. Justin's works; and its style is wholly different from that of St. Justin.

WHO IS DIOGNETUS?

It is hard to acknowledge this person and his social position, for many had this same name in the early centuries. Through this epistle we can say that he was a high-ranked pagan, who asked his Christian friend to explain the Christian faith, the nature of its worship, how it differed from pagan and Jewish worship, the change it brought about in Christian life (especially love of our neighbor), and why Christianity appeared only now, and not earlier.

According to H. Lietzmann he was perhaps the tutor of Marcus Aurelius. Henry Marou believed he was a well-known official in the Ro- man empire, while P. Anderiessen believed him to be the emperor Hadrian, and that the word "Diognetus" was one of his honorable titles, which means "the carrier of heaven."

QUADRATUS

It appears that he was an Asian, therefore some called him "*Quadratus the Asiatic*."

Quadratus was the oldest apologist for Christianity. We are indebted to Eusebius for all that we know about him. He says:
[But Trajan having ruled for nineteen years and six month was succeeded in the imperial office by Aelius Hadrian. To him, Quadratus addressed a discourse, as an apology for the religion that we profess; because certain malicious persons attempted to harass our brethren.
The work of Quadratus is still in the hands of some of the brethren, as well as in our own; from which anyone may see evident proof, both of the understanding of the man, and of his apostolic faith.]

Quadratus presented his apology to the emperor while he was a resident in Asia Minor, about 123-124 A.D, or in 129 A.D3. Perhaps he was in Athens when he visited the emperor in 125 A.D or lately in 129 A.D4. .